

THE STUDY OF MAN

GETTING AT THE FACTS BEHIND THE SOVIET FACADE

An Expert Explains His "Content Analysis" Method

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AMONG the most urgent problems faced by the free world today is to find out what is really going on inside the USSR, and particularly the Kremlin. Such information is as essential to survival as it is to

IN JANUARY 1953 FRANZ BORKENAU, noted contemporary historian, astounded his readers on the Continent by asserting, in a West German weekly, that Stalin's life was in immediate danger. Seven weeks later Stalin's death was announced. COMMENTARY in May 1953 published an article by Dr. Borkenau giving his reasons for thinking Malenkov the prime mover of the anti-Semitic campaign that had raged behind the Iron Curtain in the months before Stalin's death. Today, almost a year later, such observers as Harry Schwartz of the New York Times are reporting, on the basis of present events in the USSR, confirmation of this diagnosis. How was Dr. Borkenau able to find out such things? In the present article he describes the method he has devised over the years for penetrating Soviet secrecy—a method that relies on no "inside" information. He here demonstrates how, in his view, it can be dependably used by anyone willing to apply himself with the necessary industry and conscientiousness; and most readers will, we daresay, be impressed by its right, as documented here, to be included in the arsenal of social science research techniques. Dr. Borkenau, a steady contributor to these pages, is the author of several authoritative books on Communism, the latest of which is *European Communism* (Harper). Born in Vienna, he was himself a member of the German Communist party until 1929. Subsequently he had a chance to witness the Spanish Civil War at first hand, and published what is still one of the best books on that tragic conflict, *The Spanish Cockpit*.

history, and in the near future may possibly make all the difference between peace and a third world war.

Yet never was information harder to come by, for never has so large an area of the inhabited earth been so tightly sealed off from the rest of humanity—not even the China of the Manchus, or the Japan of the Shoguns: at least, these countries did not lie so consistently and systematically about what went on inside them, but tried only to keep the outside world outside. The Soviet world is not content to keep the outsider away: it must also do everything to mask itself from him.

Soviet Russia, having been founded by force in the name of a utopian ideal, and being maintained by force in a way that goes directly counter to that ideal, must persuade the world that its inner reality is the opposite of what it actually is. Thus the largest part of Soviet publicistic and intellectual life, with its cultural institutions and communications machineries, is devoted to falsification on a scale without precedent in history.

However, this does not mean that our quest for the truth about the USSR is condemned to go completely unsatisfied. Nor does it excuse us from continuing to try, by every reasonable means, to get at that truth. The need is too emergent; it involves momentous political, economic, even social decisions to be taken by the leaders of the free nations that cannot be postponed, yet which cannot be arrived at on the basis of guesses. Now the fact is, a method has been found by which the inner workings of the Soviet regime can be penetrated to some extent. Despite its limitations—which are serious—this method has stood up amazingly well under testing.

THE method—which can be called a species of “content analysis”—takes its departure from what is known about the structural peculiarities of the Soviet regime and Soviet society.

The investigator must, first of all, not be taken in by the supposedly monolithic character of Soviet totalitarianism, by the unanimity with which its policies are expressed at the given moment. That dissension and factional struggle go on behind this smooth façade, especially on the top levels of authority, is shown by the recurrent purges and trials, and by the almost periodical execution, or disappearance from public view, of high leaders. Contrary to what so many sincere anti-Communists offer as explanation, these purges and these trials are not staged simply for mass consumption. The victims do not let themselves be persuaded to sacrifice their lives or liberty solely to advance the Communist cause; nor are they acting chiefly as scapegoats on whom the responsibility for the suffering of the common man in the USSR can be discharged. No, the purges, the trials, etc., etc., reflect, first and last, the presence of fierce political antagonisms among the Soviet rulers. The whole course of Soviet history, before, during, and since Stalin’s supremacy, betrays the presence of internal strife. When he realizes this, the researcher has found his entering wedge.

Domestic political struggle is one of the primary forms that the historical process has taken throughout recorded history, and Soviet society is no exception, however much its leaders would like to make it one. Their own high mortality rate would show, if anything, that internal and personal conflicts play a greater part in deciding things inside the Soviet empire than they ordinarily do elsewhere. And because they do so, they furnish perhaps the most important of all clues, as far as the outside world is concerned, to what is going on behind the scenes in the Soviet world.

What the investigator has to do is ascertain the nature of these conflicts and the issues at stake in them; the mere fact that there are internecine struggles tells him little. He must be able to interpret them and draw conclusions about their effects on Soviet policy in general. If he is to keep abreast of Soviet reality, he must also detect these conflicts before they have been fought to a conclusion, which is when the public is, as a rule, first allowed to hear about them.

It is, then, by reading correctly the signs of discord that the investigator can throw light on

the realities of Soviet power and chart its direction. But it may be asked: to what extent is such discord merely personal, a question solely of ambition and personalities; and to what extent does it involve real political differences?

Here, as in most other things, life in the USSR is different only in degree, not in kind, from life everywhere else, and it is just as hard to draw a line between the personal and the political factor. Both have to be taken into account, and especially their interaction. Yet certain peculiarities do attach to the Soviet case. Prominent among them is the institution or practice called “*chefstvo*,” which gets its name from the French word *chef*, meaning “leader” or “boss.” This system is not confined to the Soviet world, but the absence of political, economic, and intellectual freedom in that world endows it with much greater importance there, making it in effect the only way in which a Soviet citizen can rise to power or eminence. No matter what his pursuit or field, if he is ambitious he must choose a protector or patron among those already in power, and put himself in the relation of “client” to him and rely upon him for favors indispensable to advancement.

The universality of this practice creates a rather complicated and extensive system of patronage on the various echelons of Soviet power that has to be deciphered before the personal factor in Soviet politics can be given, in each case, its due importance. Difficult though this may seem, it is not always an insuperable task. The very scale on which the *chefstvo* system functions in Soviet Russia provides the observer with leads aplenty.

ONE can—up to a point—identify patronage relations in the USSR by scanning the list of those who head the big official power machines such as the party, police, army, labor unions, industrial sectors, civil service departments, etc. These heads, we can assume, are the principal wielders of patronage, and their first- and second-line staffs can be taken to be ostensibly members of their personal clientele. This equation would, however, make the problem of identifying patronage relations inside Soviet Russia only too simple, and shift the main difficulty to the identification of the relations between the top bosses alone.

The equation, useful as it may be, is too simple. And in one case, that of the Soviet army, it would appear to be downright false. Marshal Bulganin may be the army’s osten-

sible master, but its actual control seems to be split among a number of different, and competing, patronage groups—among so many, in fact, that some of them may still be unknown to us. The party's distrust of the army seems to account for this situation: thus the army is infiltrated by various extraneous political elements whose mission it is to keep the party's finger on the pulse of military power. Yet the party is not the only outside machine that has its finger there: the state police (MVD), the Foreign Office, the war industries, and perhaps still other *apparats* would seem each to have their own agents inside the military hierarchy. And what applies to the patronage system in the army also applies to the other power machines, official and personal, in the Soviet regime, though not to the same great extent.

Franz Neumann, in his monumental book on the Nazi state, *Behemoth*, showed that a totalitarian regime actually tended to be less monolithic than a democratic one because no external force like public opinion was allowed to intervene in the incessant struggle going on between the various government departments and *apparats*. (The Nazi party organization itself became transformed into just one more competing *apparat* among others soon after it achieved state power in Germany.) This has been even truer of the Soviet than of the Nazi regime. In both cases, the rivalry, the struggles, and the intrigues between the different power machines are what constitute the real substance of domestic politics.

Naturally, this war of all against all cannot be waged under the public eye, and precisely because of that is apt at any moment to erupt in physical violence—for once public opinion cannot be invoked to settle power conflicts, force becomes the only resort. To forestall this eventuality insofar as it threatens themselves, the various *apparats* seek to infiltrate each other with their agents—as we have seen in the army's case. Beria, with his MVD police machine, used to be a past master of this technique. (One example among many was his man Dekanosov, a career diplomat in the Soviet Foreign Office who served as embassy counsellor in Berlin in Hitler's time, and then as Russian minister to Sweden; along with Beria's other chief clients, he was executed at the same time as his master.) Stalin had an entirely unofficial *apparat*, a kitchen cabinet whose members were used to infiltrate every other power machine and keep them under supervision. Today, we can be sure,

Malenkov, Khrushchev, Molotov, and the rest each have their clients outside as well as inside the government departments they respectively head.

In other words, every big Soviet boss would seem to have a personal, unofficial clientele in addition to his official one. Since, however, he tries to keep the first one secret, room is left for all kinds of double-dealing, and double and even triple agents seem to abound on the higher echelons of Soviet power: men whose allegiance is ostensibly given to one master but really belongs to another—or to none except the one who appears to be winning out. The relations between these various agents sometimes become inextricably complicated, to the Soviet bosses themselves as well as the outside observer—which is why, presumably, the Kremlin strikes out so wildly and blindly and in so many different directions in moments of internal crisis, and destroys so many innocent people.

OF COURSE, all this would only go to show that the task of deciphering Soviet reality was even more hopeless than one assumed in the first place. This is not so. However shifting and fluid it may be in detail, the institution itself of *chefstvo* is quite rigid, and its functioning relatively easy to follow. Even more than Europe under feudalism, the Communist world is ruled by the principle of "*nulle homme sans seigneur*," and this, to reiterate, furnishes the investigator with a reliable starting point and a secure base of investigatory operations.

The first thing to do in trying to determine the political alignment of a high Soviet leader is to trace his official career back to its beginnings. It is safe to assume that he was a loyal client of his first official boss. But does his subsequent career show that he has abandoned this original allegiance? The question is not too hard to answer: the official gazette, or *moniteur*, of the USSR is not reticent about positions occupied, promotions, and demotions, as long as these are *official*. (It is assumed that the investigator has prepared himself for his job by learning Russian, and that he applies himself to Soviet publications and the Soviet press as his prime and main source of material.) Important political appointments are sometimes kept secret for a while, but here another feature of the Soviet system, its great addiction to protocol, comes to our help and often we can learn of these before they are formally announced. Protocol demands, and high officials themselves

insist, that they be listed in the press in the order of their real power or rank on such ceremonial occasions as a formal reception or the signing of the obituary notice of a high Soviet dignitary. Such notices often tell more than the "big" political news stories sent out by Tass, and should be constantly and carefully scanned. Of course, some skill is necessary before they can be correctly interpreted, but this is not hard to acquire.

The use of this part of the method can be illustrated by the case of Saburov, one of the top economic administrators of the USSR and a full member of the party Presidium, who was recently appointed Vice Premier. Saburov began his career under Voznesensky in the central planning agency, so the latter must be regarded as his first patron. Voznesensky's own political line is easy to distinguish: he wrote for publication, and later on his writings were publicly condemned. He belonged to the extreme left wing in the Politburo, and was Andrei Zhdanov's closest collaborator. Zhdanov died in 1948, and Voznesensky's name disappeared from the press in the spring of 1949. Did Saburov remain loyal to him? How could he have, since he succeeded Voznesensky as chief of the central planning agency? This would indicate that he had already "betrayed" his boss before his fall. But whom did he betray him to?

The date of Saburov's promotion gives us the clue. The spring of 1949 saw a general reshuffling of Soviet leadership, with Zhdanov's clients being replaced in numbers by Malenkov's, which would identify Saburov's new allegiance. But is such a coincidence enough to justify this inference? Of itself it would not satisfy the scrupulous investigator. He looks for confirmation, and—in this case—finds it; at the 19th Congress of the Russian Communist party in 1952, Saburov was elected to the Presidium along with other men more definitely known to be Malenkov clients; in December 1953 he was made Vice Premier, at a time when Malenkov was promoting all his close supporters among the economic bosses. This would, on the face of it, make a clear case for Saburov as a Malenkov client.

However, when it comes to political relations inside the USSR one can never be completely sure—at least not until the man is shot. Could Saburov have been a secret client of Beria's at the same time that he was an open one of Malenkov? If he was, none of the other Soviet higher-ups know about it, for his two latest

promotions both came at moments when Beria men were being demoted. Could Saburov, on the other hand, have served as one of Stalin's personal agents? Hardly, since he rose fastest after Stalin's death. For all these reasons, then, it seems permissible to class Saburov as a faithful "*Malenkovets*."

However, Saburov's case shows the limitations as well as the relative easiness of the method of investigation I am describing. That method does not provide fixed, immutable results, but rather proposes problems that require further investigation and research with each new day, their solution never being final.

Here the time factor comes in. The Soviet leaders cannot permanently conceal their doings from the world, but for a while they are able to conceal much. Today the essential facts of Beria's biography are clear, but two years ago, in 1952, some of these facts were not, and at that time knowledge of them—especially as they related to his shifts in political line—would have been much more useful to the West than it is now. A few years from now we shall probably know even more about Beria, but by then the practical value of that knowledge will have been further diminished. If the West is to be able to make full use of its information about the internal workings of the USSR, obviously it is essential that such information be up to date.

But, again, the investigator should not throw up his hands in despair at the task—or think it is the only useful one. The past internal history of the Soviet Union is a vast field and has still hardly been opened up by researchers. It is also a fruitful field, for the more we learn about that past and the better we understand it, the more likely we are to narrow the margin of error in the present and future. Neglect of the historical perspective has actually been the source of some of the West's most grievous mistakes vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, mistakes made by statesmen and journalists alike because of the failure to see that certain of the original guiding principles of Soviet policy still remain in force.

THE official Soviet gazette, the obituary announcements, and the lists of guests at formal receptions in Moscow are not our only sources of information about the workings of the *chefstvo*. There is also the press at large: editorials, reports of speeches, feature articles in magazines, and so on. Inevitably, political antagonisms find some sort of expression in the

Soviet press, especially at critical moments. As thoroughgoing as Bolshevik totalitarianism may be, it cannot bottle up everything. True, outspoken polemics—aside from the invective showered on a completely defeated and doomed faction—are excluded in public, but clients on the secondary levels of power will still seek to express, if only indirectly, loyalty to their respective patrons on top, and opposition to the enemies of those patrons. This they can do in articles and speeches by invoking the name of their respective protectors, by quoting from their writings and speeches, or by citing the favorite names and passages used by the protectors themselves. Scrutiny reveals that the different machines, factions, and political groupings inside the Soviet regime usually quote correspondingly different people and different texts.

Quotation and citation are, then, the principal tolerated means of taking sides publicly in the Soviet Union. This is well understood by Communist journalists and politicians—outside as well as inside the Soviet world—and it defines the etiquette of their debates and controversies. The investigator who has learned to understand this etiquette has mastered a chief part of the method of lifting corners of the Iron Curtain.

The investigator asks first of all: who, exactly, is the "authority" cited in each case? As we now know, it is important in assessing the changing policies of the Soviet regime to note whether Stalin, Lenin, or even Marx, is being invoked. The leader who continues to refer to Stalin proclaims thereby his desire to keep Stalinist policy alive; if he refers to Lenin, or Marx, it means that he implicitly advocates a revision of Stalinism. However, the direct significance of such references tends to be even greater if the name of someone still alive is invoked.

Between March 23, last year, and the first days of July, Malenkov's name was cited but once in *Pravda*—unmistakable evidence of his jeopardized position at that time. But his name reappeared immediately after Beria's arrest, and has since appeared more and more frequently. However, during those same months in which Moscow's *Pravda* was silent about Malenkov, the *Pravda* of Kiev, which was the mouthpiece of Melnikov, then Communist boss of the Ukraine, mentioned him no less than seventeen times; and the lone mention of Malenkov in Moscow's *Pravda* during that time was in an article by the same Melnikov. This would in-

dicate that, despite his lack of support in Moscow, Malenkov could count upon the unqualified backing of the boss of the Ukraine in the months before Beria's fall. It also indicates that the mechanical collection and collation of references to names in the Soviet press promise a safer basis for statements about political alignments and trends inside the USSR than any amount of speculation about the ultimate aims of Bolshevik policy.

Another illustration. For years adherents of the left wing of the Communist party, outside and inside Russia, identified themselves by quoting Zhdanov, while adherents of the right wing would quote Malenkov. During 1953 the French Communists began quoting Zhdanov less and less, and Malenkov more and more; this was a clear sign of the growing ascendancy of their right wing and its leader, Duclos. But admitted that one could distinguish the supporters of Zhdanov from those of Malenkov—how could one tell, on the other hand, that Zhdanov was the spokesman of extremism, and Malenkov of caution? Obviously, not by simply counting their citations in the Communist press. It was a question of the political contexts of these citations, and it became important to note *what* was quoted as well as *who*.

As you get used to reading the Soviet press, you discover that its columns are filled mostly with quotations, direct and indirect. This renders them on the face of it very boring and depressing reading matter. But at the same time it offers the key with which to unlock the realities behind all the verbiage, and it is possession of this key that makes it necessary, and interesting, to wade through the verbiage. Little is printed in the Communist press that does not depend, in wording even more than in meaning, on the text of some party decision, some leader's speech, or some doctrine laid down by the founding fathers of Communism. These quotations are not haphazard, but carefully selected, and the principle of selection is what matters in each case.

However, things do come out in the press now and then that are neither direct nor indirect quotations. When their meaning is clear and unambiguous, they must be accounted as constituting important events in Soviet history. For then they create, not only a new policy, but new Communist doctrine. Thus certain "new" words and phrases suddenly appearing in the press after Stalin's death—"Soviet legali-

ty," "care for the immediate needs of the citizen," etc. etc.—revealed the intention of one important faction to undertake a thoroughgoing retreat from Stalinism. These new words and phrases were not, however, to be interpreted according to their meaning in ordinary usage, but rather in terms of the degree to which they departed from previous doctrine. They meant a change simply because they were unprecedented.

Much more often, the new line and the new doctrine appear in the trappings of the old. Then only the initiated can perceive the change, which will be signified more often than not by the minute alteration of an accepted formula. In a free press, such things as the substitution of a term like "medium peasant" for "peasant" plain and simple would have little importance, but the Soviet politician and journalist is bound to the literal text of official formulas as if by criminal law, and the smallest verbal change he makes in them must reflect either opposition or an authoritative change of line.

But still another point should be kept in mind. Admiral Halsey tells in his memoirs how the American navy during the late war used to intersperse its coded messages with sheer gibberish in order to confuse the enemy and distract him from what was not gibberish. The same practice obtains in the Soviet press: anything in it that does not follow accepted texts, or say something unmistakably new, must be deemed gibberish whose only function is to mislead the public, at home and abroad. However, the investigator must learn how to strip down the empty verbiage and see whether it conceals a core of real meaning. Sometimes it does.

AT POINTS like these one has to realize that Communist doctrine, as established by Stalinist practice, claims roots in a truth discovered and laid down once and for all in the past. Constant reference to the first codifiers of this truth and its officially certified subsequent interpreters must be made in order to understand what is being said. And it must also be remembered that the thought processes of Soviet Communism in good part parody Eastern Orthodox Christianity, and sense cannot be made of them if examined under Western categories.

The investigator must know the history and content of numberless party controversies in the past as thoroughly as a learned theologian

would the countless disputes that marked the course of Christian dogma. He must know the formulas used by the various parties in these controversies, and the historical situations for which they were devised. In the long course of Bolshevism's inner-party struggles, formulas have been developed to answer practically every question that might arise. When confronted by any new eventuality in Soviet affairs, one must first relate and compare the words announcing it, with the formulas used in the past. As should be apparent by now, Soviet thought, being fundamentally superstitious, lays great stress upon words and terminology; with experience, the investigator should be able to penetrate to the real political meaning that lies behind these, just as the anthropologist can often read a kind of logic behind the magical formulas of primitive peoples.

In June 1952 Boleslav Bierut, the president of Poland, made a speech on the economic situation in which he launched the slogan: "We must direct our course towards the medium peasant." This passed completely unnoticed outside Poland, yet the phrase had historical connotations: between 1925 and 1927 it had been the official slogan of the bloc formed between Stalin and Bukharin. In 1928, when Stalin broke with Bukharin and started the compulsory collectivization of Russian agriculture, he discarded this slogan, and it was over the question of the "medium peasant" that Bukharin was first brought low (to be doomed later on to physical "liquidation"). The revival of a formula once so dramatically condemned should have caused a sensation, and was to be interpreted as the sign of an impending struggle over agrarian policy within the whole Communist world. As we know, it was not so interpreted—all the less because Bierut has not yet been able, in Poland, to put the slogan into effect. Nevertheless, his use of it was a sure sign of things to come, if not in Poland then elsewhere behind the Iron Curtain.

Over a year later, in September 1953, Krushchev made a speech—become famous by now—in which he admitted, in effect, the utter failure of Stalin's collectivization program. Western comment dealt largely with the price raises and other statistically accessible measures he announced, and overlooked the mere possibility that differences of opinion over agriculture, long smoldering under the surface among the Soviet leadership, were now com-

ing into the open. Very shortly afterwards, a struggle between the advocates of retreat and those of a new offensive on the collectivization front broke out all along the line, with the official slogan of the former—as we hear it, for example, in Hungary—being the “medium peasant,” and that of the latter the same as the one proclaimed by Stalin from 1929 on: “Class struggle in the village!”

A correct reading of these formulas would have enabled observers almost two years ago to identify the patronage groups involved, with the underlying political issues dividing them, and it would also have made it possible to predict the current struggle over agrarian policy. One lesson the whole episode drives home is that the investigator of Soviet affairs should not necessarily become uneasy when his interpretations of certain formulas are not immediately borne out by known events.

No formula is ever used accidentally in the Communist world, since a “deviation”—from the texts currently in force, that is—can have grave consequences for the person responsible. Nor is there such a thing, either, as an accidental “mistake”; responsible party functionaries are well versed in the sacred writings (not for nothing do even members of the various central committees still have to submit to periodical indoctrination courses). And in the USSR errors in general are treated, not as blunders, but as expressions of bad faith and deliberate intent. Hence Western observers should have pricked up their ears almost automatically when Bierut said what he did in June 1952. . . .

Of course, the same yardstick cannot be applied everywhere in the Soviet world. What appears in Moscow's *Pravda* has greater symptomatic value than what appears in the capitals of the federal republics or the satellite countries, which has in turn more such value than what is printed in the provincial papers. The specialized periodicals put out by the various *apparats* or government departments, such as the army's *Red Star* and the Ministry of Agriculture's *Agriculture*, have particular value as source material because they are edited with extreme care. Needless to say, special circumstances apart, the merely local press of the USSR and its satellites has the least source value.

IN THE final analysis, the method of investigation into Soviet reality that I have been

outlining can be reduced to two rather elementary basic rules (which need, of course, to be applied with intelligence). First, as far as questions of personality are concerned, any one step in a Soviet leader's career must be interpreted in the light of everything ascertainable about his previous career, which has in turn to be interpreted through the *chefstvo* system. Second, political issues must be interpreted in the light of *formulas*, doctrinal and otherwise, and their history; and such interpretation cannot be safely concluded until the whole history of the given formula has been established from its first enunciation on. Moreover, those formulas which are intelligible only to the initiated are, as a rule, much more important than the explicit facts that may or may not accompany them, however important the former may seem in themselves.

Thus it was wrong to concentrate on the details of the new Soviet agrarian policy announced in September 1953, to the total neglect of the rags and tags of old and new formulas that littered the fifty-odd pages of official text in which the announcement was made. Statistics and figures are far from sacred in the Soviet world, but formula and shibboleth are. Figures can be means to deception, or can turn out to be details of plans never to be fulfilled; but shibboleths, if wrongly or ineptly applied, can amount to life or death for those who utter them. The formulas with which Krushchev sowed his September speech were garnered from all periods and all tendencies of world Communism, a veritable potpourri that reflected a hasty, hectic, and altogether superficial compromise between a host of incompatibles. Yet the experienced observer could read all this, precisely because of its chaotic nature, as the sign of an approaching storm inside Communist ranks. Not the figures Khrushchev gave—many of which were downright fantastic—but the way in which he tried to string together conflicting formulas and conflicting views should have attracted attention.

ONE final example, a textbook one that I have chosen to conclude with because it combines all the aspects of my method of “content analysis” that have already been separately discussed. (This example involves, incidentally, a piece of evidence once before discussed in these pages by this same writer, who then reached conclusions which, he hopes, have not been altogether falsified by subsequent

events.*) On January 4, 1953, the Central Committee of the German Socialist Unity party passed a resolution on the "teachings of the Slansky case" that attracted much attention, first of all because it revealed an extreme anti-Semitic tendency reminiscent of Goebbels' propaganda; and secondly, because it indicated an impending decision in the struggle within the East German Communist organization between Ulbricht and Dahlem.

Two other important aspects of this notorious resolution passed, however, almost unnoticed. Malenkov was quoted at inordinate length, and so identified with the anti-Semitic campaign that had just reached its first climax in the Prague trials. By quoting him in this fashion, *and* by adding his own yelp to the anti-Semitic chorus, Ulbricht, the animator of the resolution, proclaimed himself a Malenkov client. But even more important: while Malenkov was cited at length, Stalin was quoted with a mere half-sentence dating from 1910. Such a deliberate affront could have been offered only by people sure of that tyrant's approaching downfall, or else out of the reach of his retribution. Otherwise it was sure suicide. It was primarily on the strength of the evidence found in this resolution that I then predicted, in print, Stalin's imminent death—which, sure enough, came seven weeks later.

Of course, the East German resolution was an unusually meaningful document that invited the most extreme conclusions because of the extent to which it went beyond what was customary in public statements in the Soviet world. Yet it would be a great mistake to consider it unique. Documents and statements of the same kind, if not of quite the same daring, are made public behind the Iron Curtain every few months; yet it is still seldom that they are assessed at their true importance and interpreted in terms of their real meaning.

THE Ulbricht resolution also demonstrated, at least to me, that direct "inside" information from the Soviet world ought not as a rule to be regarded as superior in value to the results

of that method of "content analysis" to which I have devoted this article. At the time of the East German resolution not a few Moscow observers noticed that something strange was going on, and there was no lack of straws in the wind to show that Stalin was in a political as well as physical decline. Yet all this still remained guesswork, whereas the mere counting of the words devoted to Malenkov and Stalin, respectively, in a satellite resolution gave an unambiguous answer to the question whether any faction at the Communist top intended Stalin's overthrow.

This is not to belittle the value of direct information from behind the Iron Curtain. Admittedly, much of it is "planted" by Communist agents themselves, but a lot else of it is solid and trustworthy; and on the most abstract and general level of political information it must be combined, or collated, with the results of the "content analysis" as applied to the Soviet press. But to effect this combination on any lower and more concrete level would be unwise. As in scientific research, information subject to different criteria of exactness should not be fused. The same is true with political information about the USSR.

Some "confidential" or "inside" information can be rejected out of hand as totally incompatible with positive facts derived from content analysis. What survives does not constitute, for the content analyst, additional information, but additional questions. These he will use to formulate problems for further investigation.

This or that patronage relation, this or that political trend has been rendered plausible by direct information; does content analysis serve to confirm or contradict it, or does it require the investigator to leave the problem hanging until further information arrives? The student of Soviet affairs ought not to worry unduly about unsolved problems: they are an essential ingredient of his work. In a society where murder in high places is almost as prevalent as secrecy and dissimulation—even as to the barest and simplest facts—the truth will always out. The next big crisis, never too long in the offing, with its inevitably ferocious dénouement, will most likely bring light on the most stubborn current problems about the USSR.

*See "Was Malenkov Behind the Anti-Semitic Plot?" May 1953.